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BASÁID NA HéIREANN, LONDAIN



IRISH EMBASSY, LONDON

Mr Dalton
Shelton
30/4/93

17, GROSVENOR PLACE,
SW1X 7HR
Telephone: 071-235 2171
TELEX: 916104
Fax: 071-245 6961

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27 April, 1993.

Mr. Sean O hUiginn,
Assistant Secretary,
Anglo-Irish Division,
Department of Foreign Affairs,
Dublin.

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cc PSS
PSS
M. Kelly
M. P. Murray, D/I
M. Dalton, D/I
Paul Lee
Councillor, A-2
SP+

London bombings - Reaction at Westminster

Dear Assistant Secretary,

I spoke in the past few days with a number of our contacts on the Tory backbenches and others at Westminster. Their reaction to the London bombings reflects much of what has already been reported on in our account of the media reaction but is nonetheless worth noting since it gives some perspective on feelings at Westminster.

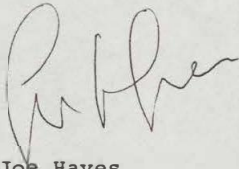
There is one discernible difference between the national sense of outrage at the recent killings in Warrington and the defiant London-oriented response to this weekends destruction at Bishopsgate. The images dominating coverage of the latter event were the dramatic photo-spreads of damaged buildings, including well-known London landmarks like the Nat West tower and neighbouring ancient churches. Despite the usual expressions of regret, the killing of the "News of the World" photographer and the toll of injured took second place. This time around the focus was very much on the loss of property, the financial costs and the continuing IRA targeting of London.

The Government stuck to its tactic of a low-key response. The Prime Minister inserted a few additional paragraphs into his address to the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development on 26 April, the central theme of which was "business as usual". Downing Street let it be known that he had met the Home Secretary and had spoken to the Lord Mayor of the City of London but they also assured the media that the bombing was only one of the items addressed at that morning's Cabinet meeting. The Chancellor also touched on a key issue of concern when he let it be known that central funds viz. the tax payer, would meet most of the costs of the damage.

Reaction at Westminster is likely to follow a predictable pattern. The bombings will undoubtedly surface during the coming week, probably at Prime Minister's questions and the Tory right-wing will press their predictable demands for an enhanced security response. This time round, however, the usual voices may be stiffened by the addition of some London-based MPs and, behind the scenes, by powerful voices who represent the interests of various financial institutions in the City of London. In the case of London, much is made of the city's ability to absorb the danger and inconvenience of terrorist threat.

Similarly, the City of London easily coped with the financial loss of last year's bombing at the Baltic Exchange. Reaction to this weekend's events should, therefore, not be overstated. Nevertheless, the sheer size of the Bishopsgate bombing puts it in a different league from the usual incident and has added to the sense that something must be seen to be done. London-based Conservative MPs and the lobby representing the financial interests of the City of London, constitute powerful pressure points within the Conservative Party whose views the Government cannot easily afford to ignore.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read 'Joe Hayes', written in dark ink.

Joe Hayes
Counsellor